
Acts, chap. 14, ver. 15. "God made the Heavens, the Earth, the Sea, and all things that are therein."

Every man, who turns his thoughts towards the Creation of the World, and takes a retrospective view of the acts of Providence, must acknowledge it not only to be the work of Omnipotence, but of a Being endowed with infinite wisdom and foresight. All things seem to harmonize and to be made for each other. When God had performed the works of creation, "he saw that they were all good," and when the foundations of the earth were laid, "the morning star," we are poetically told, "sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy."

God having determined to make man as the chief end of Creation; This globe of earth on which we live, whether it be the only world in existence, or merely a small part of the universe, it is the same--it is all the world to us, and we can speak only of what we know. This world God manifestly made for man; and whether the sun be a body of light illuminating other worlds, or not; it is sufficient for us to know, that in the creation of the universe, whether he made the sun to rule the day and cheer the world, or caused the earth to be so situated as to benefit by its light and heat, the end is answered;

for the sun is the great enlivener of nature and the parent of vegetation. By its Light we see our way before us, and by its Heat all things spring up and grow. The eyes of man are adapted to the light, and light to the eyes of man. The animal and vegetable worlds were made for his use; he is lord of all, and had an understanding given him to convert them to his purpose. All creation swarms with animal life, calculated for the support and maintenance of each other, the whole ending in the support of man; and that such support might never fail or be wanting, each species of the animal worlds, was ordained to beget its like; and in the vegetable and mineral worlds, to vegetate and grow. "Increase and multiply," was the great command of the Almighty, throughout all his works; and in obedience to that command, all things act. If there is any species of animals injurious to man, he is to judge of the injury, and, having the command of all, may remove them from him.

Let us take, then, a general view of this earth, and behold its wonders--"He hath hung the earth upon nothing." Astronomers tell us, and with a degree of moral certainty, that the earth, like other heavenly bodies, in order to act in combination with other orbs in the planetary system, turns, like a wheel, daily, round its own axis; and with such incredible velocity, as to travel near 300 miles an hour. Under such rapidity, man could not abide upon the earth, without some contrivance to fix him and render him insensible of his motion. This contrivance is the gravity or weight with which every thing tends to the earth, and it is the common motion of all things, that renders him insensible of his own. Man's situation, with respect to the earth, is like that of a fly on the ceiling of a room. The earth is apparently below him, and the heavens above him;

but the fact is, that the earth is Above him and the heavens Below. He hangs, as it were, by his feet; and that all things having a motion common with himself, renders him insensible of his own, is evident from our insensibility of a ship's motion, when on board, and out at sea, particularly if it goes a steady uniform pace. These are philosophic truths that stand confessed, and could, if necessary, be demonstrated--Wonderful and almost past conception! But so it is, and pronounces, as I have said, the harmony of all things; that if the earth is part of the planetary system, and has an office in such system to perform, and yet was made for man; man was also adapted to the earth, and by a wise combination of all things, suffers no inconvenience from its rapid motion.

Let us next consider the things of the earth--these are so astonishingly numerous and varied in their several natures, that it is impossible to speak of them in a sermon, otherwise than generally. Were we to speak of the animal world, it can only be of what we see; but there are myriads of beings not visible to human sight; many we can discern by the help of glasses, and many more are too minute to be discovered, even by these. The clear air, the pellucid water, is full of them; 30,000 have been numbered in a single drop of water, and these all organized with muscles, nerves, veins, and arteries. Even matter itself, though hard as stone, is not without them; the body of one animal is the place of residence of another; they inhabit all our meat and all our drink. Animals crawl on animals; we breathe them, are covered and lined with them. In a word, all Creation, as I have said, swarms with animal life; one becomes the prey and food of another, and all are the prey of man; Nature's Tyrant that lords it over all.

If we contemplate the great variety of animals, and consider how each species differs from another, how each possesses its peculiar beauty and singular use, and its parts are adapted to its existence and its motion; some walk, some creep, some jump, some fly, some swim: if we meditate on that faculty bestowed to each; being either some impression given at creation, or the immediate controul of some divine cause, called Instinct, by which birds build their nests, sit upon their eggs, and retire at certain seasons to warmer climes; or by which fishes, traversing the vast ocean, repair to certain rivers to cast their spawn: if we reflect on the spider's net, and the silk-worm's web: if we examine the nest of the swallow, the cell of the bee, and the granary of the ant---we shall be lost in contemplation, and be forced to acknowledge an infinite Wisdom, directing their unerring steps, to teach man Art, Industry, and Frugality.

If we explore the vegetable world, we there see that roots and herbs and trees, spring up spontaneously for the use of man, and offer themselves to his hand. God places the plant in every seed (as the young in the womb of animals) in such elegant folds and complications, as afford a pleasing and an astonishing spectacle. Even the spreading oak and lofty elm may be traced in embryo in their respective seeds. The face of Nature is painted in such gay colours, that Solomon, in all his glory, was not equally arrayed--Well may we cry out with the Psalmist, "O Lord how Wonderful art thy works! In Wisdom hast thou made them all!"

Even the bowels of the earth are not beyond the reach of man. The stores that are there concealed are hoarded, for his purpose, whether they are gems or fossils, minerals or metals, earths or waters. Every thing in man's use is the produce of the earth. The finest lace is

the work of man's hands, is made from flax, the growth of nature; Marble, stone, iron, gold, and other metals are collected from the bowels of the earth;--so the topaz, the emerald, and the diamond: They receive their form and polish from the hands of men, but their substance is the produce of the earth. Man's invention has found a use for every thing, and when we examine with wonder the sculpture of the Greeks, the architecture of the Romans, the vases, the pictures, the gems, and all the curiosities of ancient and modern ages, we may almost compare man to the Deity, give him the attribute of Omnipotence, and call him God's Vicegerent, ordained to carry his designs into execution. His invention and ingenuity are certainly creative powers, and though like the omnipotent Lord of Heaven and Earth, he cannot by his Fiat, bring Something out of Nothing; yet, by the understanding his Creator has endowed him with, he is able to work Wonders;--he can penetrate the recesses of the earth, search the bottom of the deep, and waft himself with safety and certainty over the abyss of waters. How stupendous is it to think, that man can direct his way at sea for many months, though out of sight of land; can brave the dangers of the deep, and combat the unruly elements!--But man has an Understanding, and to whom does he owe this gift but to his Maker, whom he has cause incessantly to praise and thank with unbounded gratitude and love, that he "has made him but little lower than the angels to crown him with glory and honour?"

The vast expanse of ocean, is a stupendous work of God; the flux and reflux of the sea are not less astonishing in nature; its fluidity, its strength to waft and carry the most unwieldy burdens; its currents and its tides to direct them to and from certain places at stated

times, are wonderful; but who is it that effects it?--The God of Nature, whom we can do no less than praise.

Let us proceed a little further, and consider the elements and the seasons of the year. If it has pleased the Lord to congeal the hail-stones, to give wings to lightning, and hurl the thunder from his hand, we are not to arraign or condemn the act. He is Lord of the universe, and may do what he will with his own. Nothing was made in vain. Even those parts of nature, which short-sighted man can not account for, was formed for some wise purpose, hitherto perhaps unknown; but which, like other things that once we knew not, may hereafter be revealed. It is presumptuous then in man to arraign the conduct of Omnipotence in any of his works. Shall the clay say to the potter, why hast thou formed me thus?--“My thoughts,” saith the Lord, “are not Your thoughts; neither are Your ways My ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than Your ways, and My thoughts than Your thoughts.”

The elements, according to their nature may, as do men, clash and war against each other; yet, as I have observed, it tends to some wise purpose. We may as well object to the report of a cannon as to the explosion of a cloud. If the lightning alarms us, it serves to clear and purge the air, which is essential to the life of man; if it pleases God to drive the storm and hurl the lightning; He rides upon that storm, says the Psalmist, and directs it to some salutary end, beyond the ken of human knowledge, and he tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. If the raging sea rolls its tremendous volumes to the shore, threatening destruction to all before it; it shall not exceed its bounds: even the Sand shall become its barrier by a

perpetual decree, which it cannot pass, and it shall die away and fall into its former situation.

But yet finite man is capable of knowing the blessings resulting from the air that cools him, from the rivers that water the land and become vehicles of trade, from the clouds that drop down fatness, from the fanning breeze, the prolific dew, and refreshing showers. Were the clouds to shed their waters all at once, instead of refreshing the land, it would drown and destroy it; but the clouds are wafted over all the earth in succession, as the seasons roll, and drop their rains in such mild and gentle showers as give gaiety to nature and make the meadows sing for joy. The revolving seasons shew consummate wisdom. Winter meliorates the soil, frost breaks and divides it, and snow warms its bosom. Succeeding spring, with its genial warmth and prolific moisture, nourishes the plant and brings it forward; the summer's sun completes its growth, and the following autumn ripens it for use. There is a reflection here that strikes me too forcibly to pass, though it is rather a digression from the subject. It respects the life of man, which resembles a flower or a blade of corn, rising in Spring, blooming in Summer, withering in Autumn, and dying in Winter. Spring resembles his youth; Summer, his manhood: Autumn, his decline of life, and Winter his old age. All nature seems to obey the same successive order.---A time to be born, and a time to die. Surely this reflection, as we grow in life, should teach us wisdom, not to waste the hours we have, but use them to a salutary end, and whilst we study our Temporal interest, not to be unmindful of our Eternal one. Each revolving year brings us nearer to our end, and the seasons as they roll, should

teach us how our ages pass. "Teach us, Lord, so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Though so regular and uniform is nature in all her ways; her powers are sometimes withheld, her bosom convulsed, and her regularity overthrown. We have known the air to create epidemic sickness, the clouds to withhold their rain; the dews, their moisture, and the sun to parch the land, and bring on famine. At other times, we have seen torrents of water pouring from the heavens--rivers and seas over-flowing their banks, and causing inundations. We have been witnesses to the ravages of storms, the conflagrations of lightning, and such convulsions of the earth as to tumble down cities, and open and swallow up its inhabitants. So has it pleased God to punish the sins of men, by dropping the reins that guide and check the elements, suffering them to run loose and commit their depredations on the world. Dire has been the fate of men so chastised. Great has been their punishment. But let it be remembered that such reversion of the order of nature is a determined infliction of the God of Vengeance on a rebellious people. Such calamities have occurred within our memory; Dort and Petersburg have been overwhelmed, Calabria has been laid waste, and Lisbon has been swallowed up. What are we to learn from this? That the misfortunes of others should be a terror to ourselves, and that we should learn wisdom from the sufferings of our brethren. What Has been, May be; but God forbid it ever should again! War, Pestilence, Famine, Inundation, Storms, Fire, and Earthquakes are the scourges of Heaven, exercised as punishments for sin; and if we would avoid the punishment, let us avert the cause and refrain from iniquity.

Having seen now the dreary face of nature, let us once more view her in her lovely form. Let us contemplate the Beauties of creation, and in these the beneficence of the Deity, who has not only made a provision for man, but has studied his happiness. Let a man rise early from pleasing dreams and happy slumbers in the months of May or June, about an hour after sun-rise; let him wander into a rich and fertile spot and take a view of the beauties of the morn. How exquisitely will all his senses be charmed! Rapture will dart in upon his eye, harmony assail his ear, and perfumes regale his nostrils. The chearing sun gives life around. Here, verdant groves and enamelled fields attract his notice--there, velvet meads and purling rivulets. Hills rear their lordly crests, mountains boast their forests and rejoice, and lurking vallies laugh and sing. The birds, the heralds of the morn, now tune their choral notes and charm his ear, and the odour of the new-born day, his nostrils. Each sense draws in a proportion of its objects, the sensation is exquisite, and the mind is enraptured. Busy man goes forth to his daily labour, herds low at his approach, flocks bleat his welcome; every thing seems in spirits, and every thing in motion--Sure, if there is a paradise on earth, 'tis this!--But the misfortune is, what we see every day, we think little of, and what we are accustomed to, we disregard. In search of novelty, we slip enjoyments in possession, and that certain Something we have in Fancy, and which may never be acquired, corrodes and leavens our Realities.

Learn then, O Man! to be contented in that state in which it has pleased God to place thee! Enjoy the moments as they rise. Be satisfied with the gifts thou hast, the pleasures within thy reach, and pant not for those beyond thee! Be wise;---be happy.--Nature is

bountiful and good--she is ever the same.--What she gave centuries ago, she holds forth now, and will so, to the end of time. Revolving seasons bring forward the same gifts; year after year, the like occurs and if thou partakest not of the blessings, the fault is thine. Be then content. Praise God for what you have, and take no thought for the morrow. Whilst the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, spring and autumn, shall not cease. "I will not, saith God, for man's sake, any more curse the ground;" "For the thing that hath Been, it is That which shall Be---the thing that is done, Is that which shall be done, and there is nothing New under the sun."

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